

Niger Delta Weekly: Responding to Maritime Piracy and in Bayelsa State

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Description

Attacks by pirates are increasingly becoming frequent and intense in the waterways of Bayelsa state and thus exacerbating maritime insecurity in the Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea. Recent trends indicate an upsurge in maritime piracy in the state, mainly involving attacks on oil tankers, fishing trawlers, commercial boats, and hijacking of cargo ships for ransom and robberies, as well as recurrent clashes between pirates and public security operatives in the waterways. According to data (see map below), over 100 incidents of piracy were reported in Bayelsa state between February 2015 and February 2020. In February 2020, for example, pirates reportedly killed two civilians and four soldiers who were escorting an oil barge along the waterways in Letugbene community in Ekeremor LGA, Bayelsa state. The above incident is just one in a series of deadly attacks by pirates in the state. In a recent incident, in April 2020, operatives of the joint military task force code-named 'Operation Delta Safe' reportedly killed a pirate and arrested three others during a gun battle along the waterways of Bilabiri community, Ekeremor LGA.

Why it Matters

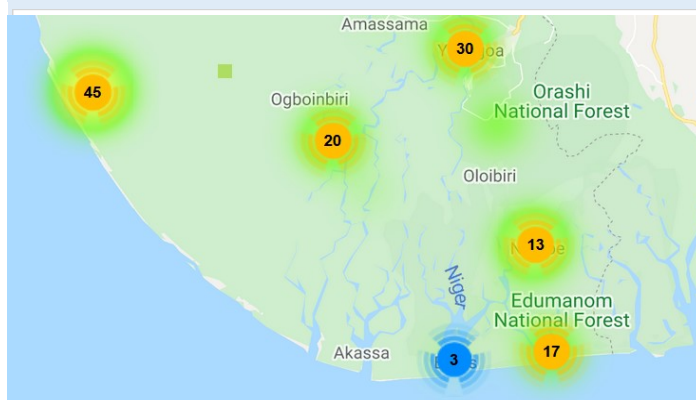
Rising incidents of piracy in the territorial waters of any country or state is a cause for alarm. In Bayelsa state, piracy is growing at an alarming rate and undermining maritime security in the state, the Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea. Piracy therefore constitutes serious social, economic and political implications for the state.

Social: Piracy facilitates the trafficking of weapons to criminals which could reinforce gang violence and criminality, as piracy often overlap with militancy and cult violence. Piracy often lead to frequent clashes between pirates and public security forces which sometimes cause collateral damage among residents. The prevalence of piracy can therefore cause anxiety and a feeling of insecurity among residents.

Economic: Piracy could negatively impact the economy of the state. Pirate activities such as attacks on offshore facilities and oil theft undercut oil and gas production which could reduce the state government revenue from federal allocations and taxation. Also, as a coastal state, pirate activities could impede water transportation, disrupt the local fishing economy, and increase the cost of doing business which could be the cost of security, loss of goods, or the cost of ransom.

Political: The prevalence of piracy could weaken state-society relations by eroding citizens' trust in the capacity of the state government and the national security agencies to protect life and property. Illicit profits from piracy could also be used to fund criminal networks such as militant groups, oil bunkering syndicates and cult gangs which could destabilize the state government and fuel political instability.

Incidents Heat Map of Maritime Piracy in Bayelsa State, Nigeria



Heat Map shows concentration of reported incidents of maritime piracy in Bayelsa State from February 2015 - February 2020. Sources: All data sources formatted on the P4P Peace Map www.p4p-nigerdelta.org.

Prognosis

Maritime piracy is a key security issue in Bayelsa state, driven mainly by youth unemployment and poverty, and reinforced by harsh economic conditions and political instability. Piracy in the state is highly dynamic and crosscutting - it overlap with militancy, oil bunkering, kidnapping, cult violence, and other criminal activities. The state government should collaborate with national and regional stakeholders to develop an inclusive anti-piracy strategy with a stronger interagency security coordination to mitigate the problem.

Contact Us

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Report Incidents: IPDU Early Warning System

Please report any verified incident of conflict to the IPDU SMS early warning system: Text report to **080 9936 2222**

Incident Details: Kindly include the State, LGA, Town, Date, and Brief Incident Description.



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